

America. I actually believe the related but opposite problem should be of more concern today, at this moment, and that problem is no military experience in the top ranks of our government. With the exception of Mr. Austin, no nominee on the incoming Biden administration's national security team has ever served in uniform. With regard to the entire Biden Cabinet, only one other nominee has any military experience at all. This is not wise.

If confirmed, I am sure I won't agree with all of Mr. Austin's decisions, but when the inevitable budget battles occur, it will be critical for our Nation's security and, very importantly, the military members and their families who serve to have a Secretary of Defense who understands firsthand the very real morale and readiness problems that result from drastic cuts to our military—something, unfortunately, I think many of my colleagues here in the Senate will be pushing for and even members of the Biden administration will be pushing for.

So let me conclude with this. Right now, a number of us are interviewing Cabinet members for confirmation for the incoming Biden administration. I anticipate opposing some, supporting others. Certainly, I anticipate opposing some if I believe they will hurt the working families of my State. But with regard to Mr. Austin, I am fully supporting his nomination.

We are living through difficult times—a pandemic, racial tensions, riots, turmoil at the top of the Pentagon, and rising dangers from China, Russia, and Iran. Mr. Austin's confirmation won't solve all of these problems, but it will help.

He represents the best of America—a man of integrity, humility, and character, with a wealth of relevant experience. Our allies will take comfort in his confirmation, and our adversaries will take pause. And as America's first African-American Secretary of Defense, he will be an inspiration to millions both in and out of uniform.

For all of these reasons, I strongly urge my colleagues to support Mr. Austin's confirmation and the waiver in Federal law that it requires.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

HONORING THE UNITED STATES CAPITOL POLICE

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I can say with certainty that General Austin has no better friend or ally in this Chamber than Senator DAN SULLIVAN, who has seen him as a person and seen him as a commander.

Those votes will occur later today.

Madam President, I rise today on the floor to talk about what happened yesterday at the Capitol and what happened 2 weeks ago at the Capitol.

Yesterday, we had the 59th Presidential inauguration right here. The citadel of democracy was once again

the place where a President and Vice President were sworn in for 4 years.

Starting in 1789, every 4 years, America and the world have witnessed this remarkable event that provides for the peaceful transfer of Executive power and the continuity of government—something we sometimes take for granted but is rare, even today. It has happened through wars. It has happened through economic recessions. We have had our inaugurations today and during this unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic.

What is more, the inauguration took place 2 weeks to the day on the very west steps of the United States Capitol where a violent mob stormed this building, desecrating these halls, and tried to stop our constitutionally mandated deliberations in this body.

It was the ninth inauguration ceremony I have attended. I was proud to be there as President Biden and Vice President HARRIS were sworn in.

I am here on the floor today to thank the Capitol Police and other law enforcement agencies, including the Secret Service and its Director, Jim Murray, who took the lead on this national special security event to ensure that things went smoothly and that we, indeed, had a peaceful transfer of power.

I also want to give special thanks to the men and women of the National Guard, who worked to ensure this ceremony was safe and secure. Over the past 2 weeks, 25,000 National Guard troops from across the country, including all 50 States and 3 territories, answered the call, leaving their families and friends and, for most, leaving their regular jobs to help defend this sacred celebration of democracy that occurred at this place yesterday.

This number of 25,000 troops includes nearly 1,000 guardsmen from my home State of Ohio. I had the opportunity to meet with a couple hundred of these citizen soldiers from Ohio yesterday. I was able to tell them how much we appreciate their commitment to the mission and what they have done, truly, to protect democracy and to help our Capitol Police during a stressful time. Because of their efforts, the ceremony was safe for everyone in attendance, and we were able to proceed with this transfer of power.

When I thanked them, they all told me the same thing—they were just doing their duty. They were proud to be here. They were protecting their country and their fellow citizens.

I have seen this firsthand over the years when I have visited Ohio National Guard installations around our State, including the Mansfield Air Base, the Toledo Air Base, the Springfield Air Base, Rickenbacker Air National Guard.

During this pandemic, when more Americans than ever are facing severe food insecurity, I have had the chance to hand out food with members of the Ohio Army National Guard who have been working around the clock at food banks I have been at, like Greater

Cleveland Food Bank or Central Ohio Food Bank. They are working hard alongside volunteers to respond to a true crisis.

But that is not all. The Ohio National Guard has played an essential role in providing critical assistance to our prisons and our jails when guards were out with the COVID virus. They have helped with testing. They have helped to get the COVID-19 vaccines distributed across our State, and they are continuing to do that. We can't thank them enough for what they have done during this time of crisis.

As I have visited with the Guard this week, both with regard to the Ohio members and Guard from all over the country, including some conversations I had this morning, I have told them all what I have heard from the Capitol Police this week. I have heard that they really appreciated the backup at a time when shifts have been long, sleep has been rare, and the effects of the attack on the Capitol are still acutely felt.

It has been a tough 2 weeks on our Capitol police officers. It has been a tough 2 weeks since the attack on the Capitol.

I want to take this opportunity to also express the gratitude of all of us in this Chamber and all Americans to the Capitol Police for bravely holding the line against an illegal, violent mob that threatened this building, our proceedings, and our colleagues.

In effect, the men and women of the Capitol Police Force put their lives on the line to defend democracy. It is that simple.

As I said on this floor that terrible night 2 weeks ago, it was because of their courage that we were safe and because of their courage that we were able to demonstrate to the American people and the world that we were going to accomplish our constitutional duty of certifying the election. They allowed us to do that.

As a Congress, we have begun a complete, impartial, and nonpartisan investigation into what went wrong that day. I am working across the Senate with the committees of jurisdiction—the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, where I will be the ranking Republican, the Rules Committee, the Appropriations Committee, and the Intelligence Committee to ensure that our Capitol Police are never put in that kind of position again. We are performing oversight to ensure they have what they need to be able to protect the Capitol going forward.

Without prejudging our investigation, we must consider what reforms need to be made and take a hard look at the physical security of our Capitol Complex. While these buildings must remain accessible to the people, we need to look at incorporating the best practices in physical security, to include shatterproof windows and doors that can't be easily breached. This will

cost money, but it is absolutely necessary, based on what happened on the 6th of January.

I look forward to helping lead this bipartisan effort, and I urge my fellow Members of Congress to join in.

Again, I don't want to prejudge our review, but I know among the findings we will make is a finding that the officers on the line were heroic, and those officers deserve our gratitude.

We must never forget those who lost their lives that night, including a law enforcement officer and member of the Capitol Police, Officer Brian Sicknick, who, since 2008, had patrolled these halls and had been a familiar face to many of us. He was tragically killed defending this Capitol. He gave his life in heroic defense of us and our democracy.

Only a couple of days after the attack, I learned the tragic news that we lost another officer, a friend, Officer Howard Liebengood. Howie was on duty the day the Capitol was attacked and responded to the attack just as his many brave comrades did. He experienced some difficult experiences that night. I was devastated to learn of his death the next day.

Howie was someone I used to see almost every day. He was usually stationed in the Russell Building, where my office is located. He was an utmost professional—someone who took great pride in his work and had an ironclad commitment to keeping people safe. His dad was Sergeant at Arms here at one time.

He brightened my day every time I saw him. The last time was a few weeks ago, when he was standing guard outside the doors to the Russell Building, alone in the cold, alert, vigilant, and good-humored.

Today I reread a letter that I wrote to the Chief of the Capitol Police several years ago, commending the exceptional work of Howie and his partner, Chris Gallo, for their "professionalism, coupled with their kind demeanor."

Howie represented what is great and good about not just our police force but our country.

Rest in peace, Officer Brian Sicknick and Officer Howard Liebengood.

Through the tragedy of that day 2 weeks ago came other stories of bravery and valor too. We have heard about the heroic actions of Officer Eugene Goodman, an Army veteran whose quick thinking under intense pressure protected us here in this Senate Chamber by leading the mob away from the Chamber while many of us were still inside.

He unselfishly put himself in danger and, despite the risk, handled himself with the professionalism that defines the Capitol Police, and I was pleased to see his promotion.

Officer Goodman's heroic efforts are, to me, representative of the actions of all the brave officers of the Capitol Police, who, on that day of violence and lawlessness, held the line against the mob.

I am proud of another member of the Capitol Police. This is the supervisor. Inspector Tommy Lloyd is commander of the Capitol division—as compared to the House and the Senate, commander of the division to protect the Capitol itself.

This is a powerful photograph that I saw in *TIME* magazine. It is a photograph of him facing the mob, shoulder to shoulder with his line officers.

The Capitol was breached, but because of the valor of these men and women, we were able to complete our job and are able to be here today, discussing the workings of our democracy, confirming members of the new administration, doing our job.

The actions of law enforcement in the Capitol should serve as a reminder to all of us of the risks our police officers take every single day to keep us safe—not just here in the Capitol but around the country. On Monday, for example, the city of Toledo, OH, lost one of its own when Officer Brandon Stalker of the Toledo Police Department was killed in a standoff with a gunman. Officer Stalker, only 24 years old, was the father of two young children and engaged to be married. He had a promising life ahead of him. My thoughts are with the friends and families of Officer Stalker and the friends and families of Officers Sicknick and Liebengood during this difficult time.

Even with all the threats and challenges they face, our officers of the law here and around the country carry on in their duties to protect and to serve. They are truly the best of America. Officer Stalker's fellow officers will continue to patrol the streets of Toledo to keep its citizens safe. Yesterday, despite the hardships they have faced, the Capitol Police, once again, lined the Halls of Congress, keeping watch over the inauguration of the next President and Vice President of the United States.

Together, the National Guard, the Capitol Police, the Secret Service, and other law enforcement protected a Presidential inauguration that was at once like none other in recent memory, and yet also a continuation of a long and great tradition—an unbroken chain of peacefully transferring power that our Nation has cherished since 1789. They did their duty, as they do every day, in defense of the values we Americans hold dearest—democracy, liberty, rule of law—and we all owe them a debt of gratitude.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 335

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I will be, in a moment, asking for unanimous consent that we do the waiver on the Secretary of Defense, and we will vote on that relatively shortly, the Members should be aware.

So, Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate re-

ceives H.R. 335 from the House, that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that there be 30 minutes for debate; that the bill be considered read a third time; and that the Senate vote on the passage of the bill, with 60 affirmative votes required for passage; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, all without intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SCHUMER. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, just to clarify for the Members, we expect this vote to occur sometime within the next hour.

I yield the floor.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

PROVIDING FOR AN EXCEPTION TO A LIMITATION AGAINST APPOINTMENT OF PERSONS AS SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WITHIN SEVEN YEARS OF RELIEF FROM ACTIVE DUTY

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to consideration of H.R. 335, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 335) to provide for an exception to a limitation against appointment of persons as Secretary of Defense within seven years of relief from active duty as a regular commissioned officer of the Armed Forces.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will now be up to 30 minutes of debate on the bill.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I rise today in opposition of the legislative waiver for the nominee to become the next Secretary of Defense.

Since the inception of our Republic, civilian control of our military by democratically-elected civilians has been fundamental to American Government. This principle was firmly established as General George Washington famously resigned his commission to the Continental Congress in 1783, when he might have easily positioned himself as the leader of the fledgling American Government instead. With this bedrock principle in mind, Congress in 1947 established a limitation on former military generals serving as Secretary of Defense without a sufficient number of years in civilian life. Today, Active-duty military members must have been retired for at least 7 years before becoming eligible to serve as Defense Secretary.

Four years ago, despite great concern for what I saw as an erosion of the principle of civilian control of our military, I voted in support of granting a "one-time exception" to the statutory requirement for the confirmation of Gen. James Mattis. Until Congress